

## Money Politics, Vote Buying, and Democratic Elections in Nigeria: Implication for Good Governance

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### Abstract

Nigeria over time has experienced governmental instability in the form of policy formulation, prediction, forecasting and implementation. Basic infrastructure needed for economic growth and development are still lacking in the country since the entrapment of democratic governance in the fourth republic on May 29<sup>th</sup> 1999. The citizens are far disconnected from the government. Money politics and vote buying have polluted the good quality of democracy in the country. The destructive power of money politics has been pointed out as one of the factors militating against good governance in the country. This paper examines money politics, vote buying and democratic elections in Nigeria, and their implication for good governance. The paper further reviewed that the problem associated with bad governance as a product of corrupt electoral process. The paper recommended that in order to address the issues confronting money politics and vote buying, that there should be a need to address the challenges of economic poverty and social deprivation of the people in accessing the basis necessity of life which will give confident to the people in the entrenchment of good governance and capacity building for social justices and empowerment of the people to express their civic right. It was also recommended that family should inculcate in their wards the values of honesty and transparency and the importance of a single vote to the development and progress of the country, and that anti-corruption agencies should collaborate with banks and other financial institutions to monitor the movement of cash during elections. Lastly, democratically elected leaders should ensure good governance and improve the conditions of living of the ordinary people in the society.

### Keywords:

Money politics, Vote  
buying, Election,  
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### **Background to the Study**

Money politics and vote buying and election rigging are as old as the history of election in Nigeria. Since independence in 1960 with the introduction of the electoral franchise with its one-man-one-vote mantra, politicians of all hues, tribes and tongues believing that the end justify the means, have perfected the art of using ignoble means to obtain political power. Many scholars such as (Davies, 2005; Scaffer, 2005; Schedler, 2005; Walecki, 2006; Ojo 2006) have written on money politics and vote buying in Nigeria politics because of the catastrophic effect of the phenomenon on the body politics.

The country has over time experience governmental instability in the form of policy formulation, prediction, forecasting and implementation. Basic infrastructure needed for economic growth and development are still lacking in the country since the entrapment of democratic governance in the fourth republic on May 29<sup>th</sup> 1999. The citizens are far disconnected from the government. Today in Nigeria, money politics and vote buying have polluted the good quality of democracy. In fact, the destructive power of money politics has been pointed out as one of the factors militating against good governance in the country. There are laws regulating such practice but these provisions are not sufficiently enforced. Nigeria elections should not be a product of cash and carry democracy. The will of the people should be allowed to be fully expressed. The monetization of the political process is not only contrary to the democratic tradition but also contravenes the relevant established statutory provision on spending limit. Most time the spending limit is breached by the party in power. The recently concluded Ekiti and Osun governorship elections usher in a new face in the history of money politics and vote buying in the Nigerian democratic settings. The elections witnessed a massive and brazen inducement of the electorate with money to secure their vote by the candidate. However many people are of the view that money politics and vote buying is not a new phenomenon in Nigeria politics but they argued that the trend is getting out of hand and now stands as a major threat to the country's democracy .

During the last governorship election in Ondo State from which Rotimi Akeredolu emerged as a governor, the slogan that was held sway was “vote and cook” which was used to describe the practices of inducing the voter to sell his/her vote and in turn get money reward and that would enable him/her to cook a sumptuous meal. Afterwards, “vote and cook” succeeded largely in the Ondo polls but it had its shortcomings. This is because at the polling units, a voter was not mandated to show his/her ballot paper in the course of voting to convince the party agent or compromise security agent that he actually voted for the party that gave him money. That gave room to some voters to play the fast one on the party agents by still voting for the candidates of their choice after collecting the largesse.

In Ekiti governorship elections, money politics and vote buying was modified to “see and buy”. Those who engaged in the malpractice made sure that a voter must show evidence that he/she voted for the party, which he/she had agreed to sell his/her vote. Under the arrangement, the party agent must see that the voter cast his/her vote for his party before releasing his/ her monetary reward in a “secret” manner to ensure the success of the malpractice. Reports have it that many ad-hoc staff and staff of the Independent National

Electoral Commission (INEC) with security agents were co-opted to ensure that voters thumb-printed for, as they were better positioned to see the ballot paper while the voter cast his or her vote. So, even the voter ensured that the ad-hoc staff saw his/her ballot paper after thumb printing by either “slowing down” the process of folding the paper before slotting it into the ballot box or holding it in such a way that party he voted for was clearly noticed. In virtually all the polling booths across the state, “see and buy” held sway and many days after, party loyalists and observers circulated the video clips on the social media. If money politics and vote buying is not checked it will have a damping effect on good governance in Nigeria.

### **Statement of the problem**

In Nigeria, money politics and vote buying is one major challenge that confront democratic governance. The problem of money politics and vote buying has affected development in our country. The money used in election is often recovered before any other thing is done. Most politicians who prefer to use money to buy votes from the electorate often cannot meet their daily needs. Poverty is responsible for families' inability to inculcate in their wards the values of honesty and transparency and the importance of a single vote to the development and progress of the country. More so, money politics and vote buying have made civil society groups, religious organizations and schools to see no reason to support campaigns against it in their respective capacities. Also Anti-graft agencies which are supposed to function as the watch dog of the society are not able to collaborate with banks and other financial institutions to monitor the movement of cash during elections. A report by Brookings Institution, a nonprofit public policy organization in USA has put Nigeria atop the world poverty statistics — ahead of India. The report, titled 'The Start of a New Poverty Narrative', says Nigeria has now taken over as the nation with the highest number of extremely poor people in the world, while the Republic of Congo is also rising as the second poorest in the world. The people has no choice than to retire to selling of their vote, if this is allowed to continue over time it will have a damping effect on good governance

### **Conceptual Literature**

#### **Money Politics, Vote Buying and Democratic Election in Nigeria**

Money politics can be defined as the phenomenon in the Nigeria electoral process whereby contenders for elective positions use money or money is used on their behalf as an inducement to sway their support which is not based on persuading the electorates to vote according to their wish and conviction but on the force of money that has changed hands. Related to this, is outright vote-buying. Vote buying in its literal sense, is a simple economic exchange. According to Fredrick and Schedle (2005), candidates 'buy' and citizens/electorates 'sell' “vote, as they buy and sell apples, shoes or television sets”. The act of vote-buying by this view is a contract or perhaps an auction in which voters sell their votes to the highest bidder. Parties and candidates buy vote by offering particularistic material benefits to voters. Candidates may generally aspire to purchase political support at the ballot box in accordance with the idea of market exchange. For analytical purpose, it is necessary to point out that, the commercial aspirations of vote buyers' may run into two barriers namely: objective and inter subjective barriers. On the objective side, seller compliance is uncertain,

as vote buying is an illicit business and as such, does not take place within a “normal’ market protected by social and legal norms. On the inter-subjective side, empirical accounts of participants’ perspective revealed that those electoral practices we described as “Vote-Buying” may carry different meaning in different cultural context. This is so because, in both historical and comparative perspective, vote-buying as a phenomenon is neither system specific nor space bound (Ojo, 2006). In all systems, be it developed or developing, medieval or contemporary, vote buying occurs in all regions and climes. The only difference is that it differs in magnitude and manifestation from one polity to the other. Regions or locales where episodic, electorate-related gift giving or favour rendering is common include: Benin, Taiwan, Japan, Northern Portugal and the slums of Metro Minica (Ojo, *ibid*). Moral debts can be created in more efficacious or obliged manner as well.

As one Filipino succinctly observed: Once a candidate has sworn in a registered voter as a partisan poll watcher, he or she can expect that the latter will vote for him or her. Once a person has granted us something, a favour, we would do everything to pay that favour back to him or her, sometimes even at the expense of ourselves. We tend to view persons who did us some good things as beneficiaries who can please them by doing the same for them (Bara 2007). This practice which rests upon pay offs that are not directly and explicitly tied to reciprocity in the polling booth, is sometimes referred to as indirect vote-buying. This practice was well known in 19th century England and early 20th century. France, and is common today in the Philippines and in the squatter settlements of Quito, Ecuador. In Taiwan, vote brokers typically approach relatives, friends and neighbours. A similar tactics is also employed in Thailand. For example, in the 1992 election in Thailand campaign workers for one candidate sought in each village “to recruit the person best placed to deliver support, generally someone with significant social status in the village.

Other qualifications include being respectable, well known, a local leader (either official or unofficial), the candidate's relative or close friends, or some other characteristics that would make people honour their vote promises (Callahan 2000). The use of money to buy votes does not even stop at election time. It is a common practice in Nigeria as it is in many other countries, for numerous private interest groups and political action committees which seek policy goals and legislations to serve their narrow private needs to continue to use all the means at their disposal including money, to solidify or expand their influence on the elected officials (Wright, 1985). It is observed that the relative ease with which the elected officials show their gratitude by endorsing the legislative and policy proposals of campaign contributors seems to support the hypothesis that there is a correlation between special donations to political parties and candidates and legislative votes.

Consequently, according to Sohner (1973), money has, in fact, been made to become the mothers' milk of politics, which the political gladiators must drink to remain in business. Good governance which suffers because of the phenomenon of money politics and vote-buying can be defined as all the governmental and institutional arrangements in a polity which are operated on the basis of strict compliance with the tenets and practices of democracy. All stakeholders must uphold the tenets of access to quality education,

economic empowerment, effective health-care delivery system, rule of law and other necessary social amenities. All seem to agree that democracy is the best and the most civilized method of governance known to man. Consequently it has attracted much attention from both scholars and statesmen. Regrettably however, there is no known definition of the concept that is universally acceptable. This is, perhaps, due to its atavistic nature. The liberal democratic perspective, defines democracy as a method of government which allows citizens of a state the freedom to choose their representatives through elections at regular intervals. This perspective of democracy with its periodic elections notwithstanding, has been criticized by scholars because of the limitations, it places on political participation by the citizens. It is argued that it is not representative enough because of its emphasis on material conditions before citizens can adequately participate in the democratic exchange.

### **Good Governance**

According to Ogundiya (2010), governance is " the process that is employed to achieve the noble end of the state". From the liberal conception of the state, this means that governance is meant to actualize the purpose for which the state is instituted. Oburola (2003) argued that good governance is absolutely imperative for social and economic progress. Questions have often be asked about what parameter to use to determine what is good governance and what is bad governance. Reacting to this question, Madhaw (2007), for example, argues that good governance can only be determined within the context of the value system of the people in terms of their historical background, culture, aspirations nature of political system, religious and economic objective. What this implies is that for good governance to exist in a society, it must conform to these values. From the above assertion we can categorical say that money politics and vote buying cannot translate to good governance. Development cannot take place in an atmosphere where the electorate cannot express themselves at the polls. it is in view of this this that the world Bank has said that lack of development is a direct consequence of bad governance, dephasing that under bad governance the economy cannot grow or develop. According to the World Bank (1992), bad governance has many features, among which are; failure to make clear separation between what is public good and what is private gain; failure to establish a predictable framework for law and government behavior in a manner that is conducive to development, or arbitrariness in the application of rule of law, excessive rules, regulations, licensing, requirements, etc. which impede the functioning of markets, and encourage rent-seeking , priorities, that are inconsistent with development , thus resulting in a misallocation of resources and excessive narrow base for , or non-transparencs, in decision making as Obadan (1998) argues, where all problems exist there is little or no room for development.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This paper adopts the power elite theory and the Marxist political economy model. The power-elite model analysis of politics sees power as being monopolized by a small minority who exert considerable political influence on policy decisions and outcomes. Since people are unequal in terms of access to the resources of society, some would always have more ability than others, and would therefore occupy the elite positions in society. According to

Mills (1956) only a small number of people effectively control the political system in most nations. He argued that the power elite stand atop the major key positions in society and hold 'command posts' in sectors of the economy, government, and the military. Thus, the power elite move from one sector to another, consolidating their power as they go. For power elite theorists, the concentration of the wealth and power in the hands of the few in any political democracy is too great for the voice of the average person to be heard. In the same vein, Mosca (1939) asserts that "The power of the minority is irresistible as against each of the single individual in the majority." Major decisions that affect society are taken by the elite. Even in so called democratic societies, key policy decisions will usually reflect the concerns of the elite rather than the wishes of the people. Thus the mass of the population are manipulated and controlled by the elite, passively accepting the propaganda which substantiate elite rule. For him democracy may be of the people, for the people, but definitely could never be government by the people. Similarly, Mills argued that business and government 'cannot now be seen as two distinct worlds.' He refers to political leaders as 'lieutenants' of the economic elite and claims that the decisions made by the ruling class in power are tailored systematically to favour the interests of the giant corporations and individual entrepreneurs. It is the elite that dominate the economic and political life of the society because of their wealth. Mills further states that all societies are dominated by power elite with 'unprecedented power and unaccountability'. They take decision with little or no reference to the people. Despite the fact that such decisions affect all members of society, the 'power elite' is not accountable for their actions either directly to the public or to anybody which represents the public interest. The rise of the power elite has led to 'the declining of politics as a genuine and public debate of alternative decisions.' History, therefore, is a never ending circulation of elites. Nothing ever really changes and history is, and will be, 'a graveyard of aristocracies

Furthermore, the growing profligacy of money politics in the Nigerian polity is therefore attributable to the precarious material base of our ruling classes, who sees the state as serving the Instrumentalist function as a means of production for the consolidation of their material bases through the sharing of the national cake rather than the production of the national cake (Ake 1996). Since the control of state power is synonymous with wealth and security, politics has become a zero- sum game with high possibilities of violence and political instability which has further deepened the process of political exclusion, marginalization and deprivation in the political class quest to attain power at all cost. This circumstance has thus resulted in the series of political motivated killings such as the murder of Pa Alfred Rewanu, Bola Ige, Marshall Harry, Chief Dikubo, Ayo Daramola and others in the land.

Furthermore, the Marxist political economy model sees power in terms of a society's economic system. For Marxist political economic theorists, the power elite in any political system are the creation of the economic system, which is capitalism itself, which ultimately shapes how the political system operates. According to Marx and Engels (1959) power is concentrated in the hands of those who have economic control within the society. From this perspective, ruling class power extends beyond economic relationships. In all societies the

superstructure is largely shaped by the infrastructure. In particular, the relations of production are reflected and reproduced in various institutions, values and beliefs that make up the superstructure. Thus the relationships of domination and subordination found in the infrastructure will also be found on other social institutions. The dominant social group or ruling class, that is the group which owns and controls the means of production, will largely monopolize political power, and its power is supported by the laws which are framed to protect and further its interests. Similarly, Liazos (1982, p.13) asserts that “The basic tenets of capitalist society shape everyone's life: the inequalities of social classes and the importance of profits over people.” As long as the basic institutions of society are organized to meet the needs of the few rather than the majority, the public character of politics become eroded and the political process is not only monetized but also effectively privatized. Furthermore, when all power is in the hands of a small group of people, ruling elite, abuse of power is inevitable. For as Lord Arton puts it: “power tends to corrupt; absolute power corrupts absolutely.” No matter how “good” their original intentions, power holders find that exercising authority becomes an end in itself, rather than a means to an end. Accordingly, Leys (1975) opines that the control of the state by the ruling elite is exercised not by an independent and assertive domestic class of capitalists, but by a 'comprador' bourgeoisie, which uses its control of the state to feather its own nest with the help of access to public funds.

Furthermore, Nigerian leaders places more value on capturing power for themselves and grow increasingly fearful about what seemed to them to be the grave consequences of losing to their rivals in the competition for the control of state power. As such, their actions and behaviour when they assume positions of leadership becomes inconsistent with the democratic due process that brought them to power. This ruling class therefore see governance as an investment to which they ploy in their resources with the expectation of making returns in form of profits. In such context, the leadership does not see democracy as a sacred tenet to be defended and protected at all costs. To them, it is simply a vehicle of convenience for the promotion of their interest for primitive accumulation. Thus at the various levels of government since 1960, Nigeria's post- independence leaders have utilized control of state power to strengthen their material base through statist policies of nationalism, privatization, imposition of coercion in the labour process and political control of the nation's natural resources. Political power, therefore, became synonymous with access to wealth and reproduction of the hegemonic fractionalization of the political elite.

### **Reason Why Politicians Buy Votes**

The primary reason why politicians buy votes is the hunger for power. Vote buying is a form of desperation to remain in power. Many politicians fight for the privilege of power because it implies influence and control over other individuals. They see power as the easiest way to achieve fame and fortune. Candidates want to purchase the vote of the people to obtain domination on different public organizations as mechanisms. They are not afraid to spend a big amount of money because the moment they win the elections, they can recover much more money than that was paid to the individuals who sell their votes.

### **Reasons Why People Sell their Votes**

According to personal survey, one in two of the registered voters think that there is nothing bad in accepting the money offers from the candidates. Others may not see this from money-giving as an attempt to buy their votes. They accept the money but it does not necessarily mean that they will vote for that candidate. Another reason is the offer seems as an opportunity to get the money that was stolen by the politicians back to the people. They might as well accept the offered money since it came from the taxes of the people. The disconnect between the government and the governed makes those in the rural areas more probable in accepting money compared to those who live in urban areas. This shows that the primary reason for the selling of votes is poverty. Those who live in or below the poverty line mostly are unemployed individuals. They accepted the money because they needed it. For the poor, payment for a vote can mean a week without hunger. They just accept the offer because for them, dignity and pride cannot create food and money.

Some may see elections as the only chance to obtain something from the government. They have this view that it is an obligation of a candidate to give money and other material things to their supporters. There are some reasons that we can consider negative in the part of the voters. People accept payments because they are being threatened. In most cases, material offers are accompanied with terror thereby making the offer difficult to refuse.

### **The Implication of Money Politics, Vote Buying and Election on Good Governance**

Literature shows that exchanging rewards for votes mostly leads to bad governance. Buying votes comes out as one way that maintains corruption in government undertakings. This is likely because “candidates who win an election through massive spending will definitely endeavour to recover such costs which easily encourages corruption” (Muhumuza, 1997, p. 176). Indeed in Nigeria, it is known that leaders who spend money buying votes try as much as possible to recover these expenses, especially when they are later given administrative positions where they find easy ways to snatch on public funds.

Equally mentioned is that electoral malpractice, such as vote buying, “reduces critical citizenship” (Bratton, 2008, p.16). Loss of critical citizenship can be dangerous as leaders will not be held responsible for their actions by an uncritical population. This in a way derails good governance. More so, it is indicated that bought votes have negative impacts on service delivery by leaders. On this, Gonzalez et al. (2014, p.198) point out that politicians who reap the fruits of vote buying have few incentives to improve public services and the overall living standards of the poor because they benefit from subjecting certain constituencies to a poverty trap. In Nigeria, public services such as schools, roads and water are really wanting.

### **Conclusion**

From the prior, it is apparent that the difficulties related with the emergency of good governance are multi-faceted with the issue of defilement being the important factor. In this manner, the way out of this issue of heedless governance that has invaded our country lay on the need to address the issues of monetary neediness and social hardship of the majority in getting to the essential necessities of life. This will go far to make the stage for the



entrenchment of good governance and limit working for social equity and strengthening for the majority to practice their social equality suitably.

In comparable vein, we should all aggregately emerge frame our sleep to grab our sway from the political class who have abused it to the drawback of the majority. This can be accomplished by utilizing the instrument of aggregate reorientation and arousing of the nationalistic cognizance in us to guarantee the establishment of a legitimate law based framework with the correct qualities and common culture where the will of the best lion's share would be the last referee in choosing the type of governance we require and those that will oversee the country. Moreover, the general population of Nigeria must demand the detailing of a constitution that is individuals situated and complemented to by a submission and not the sort of constitution that we are working now which is a military contraption described with all types of irregularities that has neglected to address the relevant national inquiry of genuine federalism, asset determination, genuine citizenship, indigenization and pioneer difficulty, and financial federalism to say yet a maybe a couple.

### **Recommendations**

Money politics and vote buying cannot be completely annihilated in Nigeria. Nonetheless, there ought to be in any event some control measure by which its negative results on sound decisions can be limited. The paper recommends that families should inculcate in their wards the values of honesty and transparency and the importance of a single vote to the development and progress of the country. More so, civil society groups, religious organizations and schools should support campaigns against vote buying in their respective capacities. Also Anti-graft agencies need to collaborate with banks and other financial institutions to monitor the movement of cash during elections.

Democratically elected public officers should ensure good governance, and improve the conditions of the ordinary people in the country. Finally there is likewise requirement for political instruction of the electorate to be better in their appointive decisions, and limit the weights put on their chosen candidate for money related and material gain and prize for vote. Party authorities ought to be prepared on the best way to oversee electioneering procedure and crusades in which competitors have a well and powerful manifestoes.

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